

Interreligious Co Existence & Islamic Concept of Mutual Respect

Tayyaba Razzaq: PhD Scholar, Institute of Islamic Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore

Abstract:

Interreligious co existence is an essential propogation of mutual understanding and adequate relationship. In this age of disruption and discrimination' the need of interfaith harmony has increased manifold. Interreligious co existence is inevitable for world religions. It can enable suffering humanity to find out techniques and methods to sit together, in a much more acceptable atmosphere. The purpose of the research is to investigate the status of interfaith harmony in the world religions and the divinal concept & historical evidences of inter-faith harmony in Islam?Islam teaches mutual respect; the code of selfless service to the whole of divine creation and especially man and inculcates understanding and realization of basic truth. A Muslim, 'if he understands the acual meaning of Islam'can never talk of any religion disparagingly and respect all religions and their Prophets as it is included in the foundational believes. Islam teaches respect for Divine guidance and revelation, but in cautions enough to discriminate between the authentic record and the less correct versions. But whatever content of religious scripture may have taken, a Muslim is bound to show respect toward theses scriptures. Islam initiated an era of inter-religious, inter-faith and international tolerance and goodwill. The primary consideration and the ultimate target are to bring about universal peace in the world. The research article throws light on interfaith harmony in the world religions briefly and Islamic basic concept of interreligious co existence in the light of the religious dogma' in details. The descriptive methodology with analytical tone is adopted.

Key Words: Interreligious-co-existence, primary consideration, Disparagingly, inter-faith, Divine guidance.

Introduction

To day's innovative human-life, the chief demand of the time seems to be that all possible resources be exploited for progress and advancement in human life. Human are very enthusiastically devoted to the idea of improvement. The materialistic progresses have laid the ultimate reaction. In both eastern and western world, there is a marked craving for keeping up the balance between material and non-material aspect of human life.

The great struggle for existence and supremacy that exist today has essentialised and serious clashes. Someway, there are ideological and methodological clashes. Jealousies and rivalries seem to be dividing mankind into parts' while religions are trying to bring about peace between the warring camps. The alarming situation has necessitated reinforced keen interest in the religious studies to enable humans to ward off the impending conflict and trouble. The modern religious studies have begun to review the religious documentation and dig out the original and find out ways of mutual understanding as much as possible without disturbing the foundational beliefs.

Religion beneficially engaged for bringing about the much coveted and long desires peaceful atmosphere in which inhabitants of the world can live vigorously without apprehension of suffocation through ignorance and intolerance.

Interfaith Harmony in the World Religions

The Religious doctrine never provokes towards violence & wars. There are common grounds in all religions like the main concept of life after death or the life hereafter. Every religion has faith that everyone has to answerable of his deeds (karma). Everyone has to be accountable on may be in the Day of Judgment or in some rebirth life etc. Gore Vidal describes that Judaism towards Islam is relatively mild. It is not honored in the same way as Islamic law honors the Jewish sacred scrolls, but is treated as an ordinary book. Most rabbinical establishment accepts that Islam is not idolatry so should be treated well.¹



Figure: Interfaith Harmony with their Religious Signs

The Christianity speaks effectively to other faiths and

understands each other as spiritual ways. Not just sets of rigid dogmas, there must be dialogue at the deepest spiritual level. Christianity claims to be 'a light to lighten the Gentiles' it must show that it has important spiritual teaching and experience which fulfill men's deepest hopes. No religion emphasized to show disrespect to others especially their spiritual leaders or prophets. The Bible gives evidence in this regard. "Or ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess."²

Buddhists have the history of real peace and never fought religious wars. The religious dogma "Tripitaka" 'sangha' reflects the principle of universal adoration, sympathy and pity. It gives the primary rules to solve the problems of the human race.³ Dalai Lama viewed that entire human race should be taken & treated in positive way. He states "so, if you wish to overcome that feeling of isolation and loneliness, I think that you're under lying attitude make a tremendous difference."⁴ Dalai Lama further emphasized to be interconnected. For example "the book you read was made possible by many people who provided paper, ink, publishing, shipping and writing". He concludes that relating to other may creates hardships, quarrel and some time cursing but we should maintain friendly relationship to lead a good and enjoyable happy life.⁵

The remedy of all contemporary issues among individuals & nationals surely lies in interfaith harmony through dialogue conducted and propagated at greater levels. Difference of opinion is natural to them but a sound solution of their disputes is in mutual harmony and dialogue.

Man's vicegerency on earth is the outcome of a dialogue, services & welfare of humanity only the different methods of worships in major world religions. Every religion gives the message of peace & harmony particularly Islam is the religion of peace & harmony and invites to attain peace, endurance, pardon, harmony & prosperity worldwide.⁶ Islam has the principle of mutual respect for worship places of all religions. As Allah Almighty says that; "All humans are same in the sight of Allah, as all created from Adam & Eve".⁷

Non-violence, kindness, helpfulness, forgiveness, charity and brotherhood are ideals that a religion demands from its follower. Serve and help all, irrespective of caste, color of skin, creed, sex,

nation and language. Be tolerant, patient, more loving and need to create a vehicle of all religions of the world forgetting their narrowness and showing forth their religion of giving more taking less, sacrifices of compassion with peace. Respect others religious believes. The life Motto of a Sikh is “sarbat da bhala”, happiness and comfort of all. “And whatever is present in the skies & the earth, will ultimately return to towards Him “Allah”⁸.

Islamic Concept of Interreligious Co Existence;

The word “Islam” has distinctive characteristic that it doesn't based on an attachment with a certain person as other religions. The word “Islam” means” peace” and “submission”. Peace between God, man and to overall divine plan of life. Islam invites the entire humanity toward peace. All humanity is created from a single being⁹ and is respectful¹⁰ because “Mankind is the family of God”¹¹.

The Quranic Rules

The teachings of Islam is universal, dominant¹² & unanimous. Islam is torch-bearer of the dignity respect¹³ & equality of entire human beings.¹⁴ Islam is the religion of entire humanity¹⁵; irrespective of cast, creed, color, and the best is pious one.¹⁶ The holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ the prophet towards all human kind.¹⁷ There is well knit, well integrated, cosmic unity behind the entire life. Islam lays stress to flourish & promote love, peace, tolerance and well wishing among the people.

The basic Islamic preaching principle is not to impose it to anyone (unwilling).¹⁸ The Islam promotes peaceful negotiations. It advises to solve the controversies through peaceful dialogue with regards to methodology and without the usage of any kind of violence.¹⁹ اذْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ In a particular situation of debate, Muslims are commanded to behave with wisdom & advice in good manners²⁰ اَلْأَنْتِجَادُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ This is the distinction of the universal religion “Islam” that differentiate it from Semitic & non Semitic religions.

Islam hasn't denied rewards of the followers of the religions other than it, with the right beliefs and good practices. Quran says; “those who believe in Islam, and Jews and Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the last day and do well they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve”.²¹

The Prophet ﷺ Sayings

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the Prophet of entire humanity²² and all humanity is like the family of Allah²³ so peaceful co-existence is for mutual respect concerned with any religion. To make dialogue fruitful, the holy Quran lays down meaningful guidelines & principles. Allah has commanded the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to call them for dialogue at the common terms between you and them. ²⁴تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ. The distinction of religious harmony is the quality of Islamic dogma. No other religion can claim that their religious scripture is consisted upon this feature that “when you call them towards the path of Allah, call them with wisdom, good talk & debate within soft style”²⁵ “if they argue say, “Allah is entirely known”²⁶. This is the blessed personality of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, who teach very briefly, the manners to convey & convince the message of Allah.²⁷ The Jesus was sent toward a specific nation²⁸ and commanded his disciples to go towards a specific group.²⁹ On this ground of universal peace & harmony, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ signed pacts with non-Muslims like Jews & Christians. Moreover similar pacts were signed with smaller states as well. He always forgave his enemies and treated them kindly. It can be deduced that Islam is the religion of love, peace & harmony.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ himself shown a high degree of tolerance, born of genuine understanding of the view points of those who were following way of the life preached to them by the earlier Prophets. Once a delegation of Christians of Najran’ consisted upon 24 heads of tribes came to the Prophet (S.A.W) in His Mosque. It was evening and the time of their prayer. The Prophet ﷺ allowed “asqaf abu al haris” who was the pop of a Church’ to offer his prayer there.³⁰

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ wanted world peace & human brotherhood and religious harmony. He brought the message of universal peace, of a common brother hood of an everlasting bliss, provided one did away with the distinction of caste, color, creed and country and by taking one stand on a common platform, helped humanity in striving to attain communion with the soul of the universe. After all’ humanity is one, like indivisible self.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, “All human being is the

creation of Allah, therefore, the man who benefits humanity the most, is the greatest friend of Allah". In an Islamic state, followers of other religions have been given the same security, peace and rights as of Muslims. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said that it is our duty to give protection,³¹ their killer will be rewarded severely.³² The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as the leader of Madina state had given respect & security to worship places of Jews synagogues' and same was the practice of the four caliphs of Islam too. Muslim conquerors were advised not to demolish the sacred sites³³ & not to kill monks.³⁴

The holy Prophet's attitude towards peace, religious liberty and mutual co-existence manifests pluralist vision of Islam. Professor Hitti writes in his book that "All non-Muslims being allowed autonomy under their own religious heads"³⁵ Another viewed " discussing the conditions under which jews and Christians could remain on muslim soil and be considered part of the community, Mohammad added: he who wrong a jew or a Christian will have me as his accuser". Again and again he recommended his tolerance towards the faith which so resembled His own. In all his treaties with Christians, he invariably guaranteed their liberty of worship".³⁶

Islam Shows Respect of all Religious Sites

Islamic history depicts that non-Muslims in Islamic state have the equal rights of life. Islam gives protection to their honor, wealth and sacred places. Islam lays stress on non-Muslims to abide by the rule of peace & harmony. The holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ made a treaty with the inhabitants of 'Najran' that they are safe and will not be forced to change their religion, may he is monastic monk, priest or any follower. They could worship in their worship places safely & freely.³⁷

Allah Almighty says to the holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to be tolerant toward the opposition; "not to hate of people who banned your entry from the holy Mosque provoke you to violence".³⁸

الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفُتِنَتْ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَمَسَاجِدُ يُذْكَرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ

³⁹

"Those who were unfairly expelled from their houses, just because for their statement that Allah is Our Lord." Was it not that Lord Repulse people by some others: monasteries, churches,

synagogues & mosques ‘where Allah’s name called out the name of God is mentioned much’ would have been demolished? And Allah helps whoever supports Him.”Islam has given the golden rules not only for the respect of sacred places other than Islam but also forbids making fun of their religious icon or calling out by bad names for their gods.

The Quran further says says;

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ⁴⁰

“Not to abuse (offend) who announce their gods other than Allah, in case they will insult your God with offensive &unawareness”. Allama Shabeer Ahmed Usmani explained the point and says that to call-out disgusting &insulting words for the other religious (spiritual) leaders or their gods, is never permitted in our Holy Book.⁴¹

In Islamic history, during the period of the first caliph of Islam, ‘Abu-Bakar Sediq (May Allah be please with them)’ ordered his army commanders not to demolish the worship places of the Conquered territories and leave the people, who enclosedthemselves into their worship places.⁴²They can even take out their religious processions with their religious icon of cross.⁴³The second caliph of Islam, ‘Umar Farooq r.a’ after the conquered of “Bytul Maqdas”, ordered not to demolish churches and even their surroundings.⁴⁴The Orientalist Montgomery Walt’ has confessed that Christians were more secure under the Arab rule.⁴⁵Religious biasness and intolerance is not a likely action in Islam. Quran also says “not to impose your religion at others”.⁴⁶ For interfaith harmony & mutual respect’ some collective rules to be followed are;

- Come at the common terms
- At the controversial topic of discussion be soft & calm
- Don’t misbehave with the followers of other religion
- Don’t impose your believes & creeds
- Don’t be disgraceful towards the honorable religious leaders
- Don’t destroy religious places of other religion
- Don’t stop them from their worship (prayers & meditation)
- Blasphemy is totally prohibited
- Don’t make fun their Religious-Icons

Interfaith Harmony ...Need of the Time

The foundational need of Interfaith Harmony cannot be denied for the propagation of mutual respect, understanding &

relationship. In this age of disruption & discrimination the need of tolerance has increased manifold. It is needed inevitably not only for the religion but for civilization as well. All world religion generally and Islam particularly 'encourage it in every era for enhancement of mutual respect & tolerance. But with the reference to the present age, this is an extremely noteworthy fact that some ideologies except Islam are unconcerned with collective affair of human society as the secularism is the latest approach appealing majority of human, especially in Europe.

Conclusion

A deep analysis of all religions collectively reveals that they are all based on love among humans. It is like that because the propagation of religious thought can be carried out unless man is loved. The love of humanity is the essence of all religions. The whole mankind shares genetic unity being the sons or daughters of the Adam & Eve, although his mankind spreading out in the world acquired various habits and customs on account of its different geographical and anthropographical environments.

Their is essential need of Interreligious co-existence & harmony and this has been the mode of Allah Almighty & His Prophets .Islam has given the concept of mutual respect for all and that is elaborated in the light of Islamic history. All humans are equal in Islam and all non Muslim have the same right as Muslim. Islam is also eager to make good relationship with non Muslim for universal peace and prosperity. It seeks to create better understanding. Peace, freedom and prosperity should be for all.

Outcomes

1. All religions as the whole reveals that they are all based on love among humans.
2. Religions are almost same, as the basic morality & ethics are same for entire human race
3. The spiritual leaders somehow' resemble one another in form, have a sense of their rights and like to live in a society for the benefit of humanity.
4. Metaphorically spiritual purification in religious scriptures has different phenomena.
5. Every religion has given the guiding principles of inter-relations at different stages of life.
6. The remedy of all contemporary issues among individuals & nationals surely lies in interfaith harmony through dialogue

conducted and propagated at greater levels.

Recommendations

- Love & peace is the core of religions. Due to lack of the genuine information of other religion, there is confusion between religions. There is need of awareness of the actual information's & teachings of the world religion.
- There is lack of tolerance for other faiths generally. So there is need of acceptance & tolerance for interfaith harmony.
- In case of interfaith tussle, there should be investigation to find out the root causes of the conflicts.
- There is need of the formation of proper policies for interfaith harmony & peace.
- There should be no discriminations in minorities and equal religious & constitutional rights should be given to them
- There should be no room for Extremism world-wide

References

- ¹ Gore Vidal, Jewish History, Jewish Religion (United Kingdom: Pluto Press London, 1994) p:83
- ² Acts 19:37
- ³ Tri-Pataki
- ⁴ A. L. Sadler, cha-no-yu: The Japanese Tea Ceremony, (Rutland, Vt: Charles Tuttle, 1962) p:1
- ⁵ Religions of the World, Buddhism, p:163
- ⁶ Al-Imran 3:124, 200
- ⁷ Al-Hujarat 49:13
- ⁸ Al-Imran 3:83
- ⁹ Al-Nisa 4:1
- ¹⁰ Al-Quran 95:4
- ¹¹ Tabrazi, Mishkat al Masabih. 111/72, dar-al-fikar, Beriut, 1421 A.H
- ¹² Touba 9:33
- ¹³ Bani -Isarel 17:70
- ¹⁴ Al-Hujraat 49:13. Dr. Israr Ahmad, Quran or Amni-Alam, (Pakistan: Anjuman Khudamul Quran, Lahore 1993) p:11
- ¹⁵ Al-Baqarah 2:21
- ¹⁶ Al-Hujarat 49:13
- ¹⁷ Al-Araf 7:158
- ¹⁸ Al-Baqarah 2:256; Yunus 10:99

- 19 Al-Nahal 16:125
- 20 Alkaboot 29:46
- 21 Al-Baqarah 2:62
- 22 Al-Araaf 7:158
- 23 Al Mishkat-ul-Masabeeh (with reference Al Behqi), by Abu
Abdullah Muhammad bin Abdullah al Khateeb(Published by H. M.
Saeed Company,Karachi, 1399 A.H) P:425
- 24 Al-Imran 3:64
- 25 Al-Nahal 16:125
- 26 Al-Hajj22:68
- 27 Shebli Naumani, Seerat-u-Nabi (Pakistan: Al-Faisal Publisher,
Lahore) 4/91
- 28 Methew 15:24
- 29 Mathew 6:10
- 30 Muhammad Sualima Mansoor-Puri, Rahmata lil Alameem,
(Pakistan:progressive books Lahore, 1994) 1/182
- 31 Byhaqi,Abu-Bakar Ahmad bin Hussain bin Ali, Al-Sunnanul Kubra
(Lebanon :Darul-kutbul- Arabia, Beirut) 8/30
- 32 Al-Bukhārī, Muhammad bin Ismāīl .(1987). Al-Jami‘al-Ṣaḥīḥ, (Ed:
Muṣṭafā Dīb al-Baghā). Bayrūt: Dār Ibn Kathīr, Kitābul- Diyaāt,
Bāb; Man Qātal Zamiha
- 33 Al-Jaṣṣaṣ, Abū bakr .(1405ah).Ahkam al-Qur’ān, (Ed: Muhammad
al-sadiq Qamhavi), (Bayrūt: Dārihyā al-turāth al-‘Arabi. 5/183; Ibn
Qayam,Muhammad bin Abubakar Ayub, Ahkam al- Ahluzima,
(Bayrūt: Dār al-ibn- Hazam)
- 34 Ahmad Bin Hambal, Abu Abdullah bin Muhammad,Al-Musnad,
Hadees No 2724(Lebanon :Beirut)
- 35 Hitti Philip K, History of the Arabs, (Macmillan Education ltd,
1991
- 36 Bodily, R.V.C., The Messenger,(Lahore: Orientalia, 1954) p:270
- 37 Ibn-Saad, Tabqaat-ul-Kubraa, 1:288. Tahirul Qadri, Dr.Dahshat
gardi or Fitany Khwarag, (Pakistan: Minhajul Quran Publications,
2010 p:199
- 38 Al-Maida 5:2
- 39 Al-Hajj 22:40
- 40 Al-Anaam 6:108

- ⁴¹ View details of the Surah Al-Anaam verse 108 in Tafseer- Usmani.
- ⁴² Imam Malik, Al-Muwatta, Hadees no. 966 2/448. Al- Byhaq, Sunanul-Kubra 9/89
- ⁴³ Imam Abu- Yousaf, kitab-ul-Kharaj, 185
- ⁴⁴ Shible Nuamani, Alfarooq, (Pakistan: Islamic Aukami Lahore, 1997 p:286
- ⁴⁵ Montgomery Watt, Islamic political thought, the basic concepts, p:51
- ⁴⁶ Al-Ahzaab 33:21